NCA
VOC FOR PGM/FN
BACKGROUNDER NO. 5-6019 JULY 21, 1978
TAKIS KLADAKIS

EGYPT'S ANNIVERSARY

ANNCR:

EGYPT CELEBRATES THE TWENTY SIXTH ANNIVERSARY OF ITS REVOLUTION ON SATURDAY (JULY 22), AND VOA'S TAKIS KLADAKIS HAS THIS BACKGROUND REPORT ON SOME OF THE EVENTS THAT HAVE MARKED THAT COUNTRY'S HISTORY SINCE THE REVOLUTION.

VOICE:

THE NINETEEN FIFTY TWO REVOLUTION, WHICH ENDED MONARCHICAL RULE IN EGYPT, WAS A PRAGMATIC RESPONSE TO GROWING PROBLEMS. MOST IMPORTANTLY, THE COUNTRY WAS AT THAT TIME DRIFTING INTO ANARCHY, AMIDST INCREASING POLITICAL AND SOCIAL UNREST AND ECONOMIC GRIEVANCES.

(OPT) DISPARITIES IN PROPERTY DISTRIBUTION WAS EXTREME; THE POPULATION GROWTH EXCEEDED THE RATE OF INCREASE IN AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION; THE KING'S GOVERNMENT WAS CORRUPT AND IT WAS BLAMED FOR THE CONTINUED PRESENCE OF BRITISH TROOPS ON EGYPTIAN SOIL AND FOR COMMITTING AN UNPREPARED AND ILL-EQUIPPED ARMY TO THE PALESTINIAN WAR OF NINETEEN FORTY EIGHT. (END OPT)

THE SMALL GROUP OF "FREE OFFICERS" WHO OVERTHREW KING FAROUK CAME TO POWER WITH IDEALS BUT WITH N O DEVELOPED METHODOLOGY FOR BRINGING ABOUT THEIR VISION OF A NEW EGYPT. AT BEST, THEY SUCCEEDED WITH THE AGRARIAN REFORM THEY INTRODUCED TO BREAK THE POWER OF THE OLD RULING OLIGARCHY, LONG ROOTED IN LANDED ESTATES. IT WAS LEFT TO GAMAL ABEL NASSER TO DEVELOPEA CLEARLY DEFINED IDEOLOGY FOR THE EGYPTIAN REVOLUTION AND INTRODUCE HIS FORM OF SOCIALISM -- WHICH WAS A BLENDING OF SOCIALIST PRINCIPLES WITH EGALITARIAN PRECEPTS OF ISLAM AND WITH NATIONALISM.

THE NATIONALIZATIONS AND A SERIES OF SOCIALISTIC MEASURES THAT FOLLOWED GAVE THE GOVERNMENT INCREASED CONTROL OVER SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL AFFAIRS. AT THE SAME TIME, THE NEW CLASS OF POLITICAL, TECHNICAL AND MANAGERIAL ELITE AND INTELLECTUALS WERE ASKED TO ACCEPT AND EVEN GIVE ENTHUSIASTIC SUPPORT TO A SYSTEM WHICH STILL PLACED LIMITATIONS UPON FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION. THE POLITICAL PARTIES HAD BEEN ABOLISHED AND THE SINGLE PARTY ESTABLISHED IN NINETEEN SIXTY TWO BY NASSER PERVADED ALL SECTORS OF NATIONAL LIFE.

IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS, A PERIOD OF INITIAL SUCCESS THAT ENHANCED NASSER'S IMAGE AND POPULARITY WAS FOLLOWED BY FRUSTRATIONS, DEFEATS IN TWO WARS WITH ISRAEL AND A STEADILY INCREASING DEPENDENCE ON THE SOVIET UNION. AT THE SAME TIME, THE ECONOMIC SITUATION WAS DETERIORATING. THE CHIEF VILLAIN, BESIDES WAR AND THE THREAT OF WAR, WAS THE RUNAWAY POPULATION. FOOD PRODUCTION, WHICH SPURTED AFTER THE COMPLETION OF THE ASWAM HIGH DAM, DID N O T KEEP PACE WITH THE POPULATION INCREASE. AND EGYPT HAD TO DIVERT MONEY FROM DEVELOPMENT TO BUY FOOD FROM ABROAD AND TO FINANCE SUBSIDIES.

NASSER DIED OF A HEART ATTACK IN NINETEEN SEVENTY. BUT THE PROBLEMS REMAINED. PRESIDENT SADAT HAD TO DEAL WITH A CUMBERSOME SOCIALIST STATE. RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION DETERIORATED AS PRESIDENT SADAT MOVED TO REVIVE THE COUNTRY'S ECONOMY, TO COOPERATE WITH THE WEST, TO CUT RED TAPE AND TO LURE WESTERN CAPITAL. INCREASING ANTI-SOVIET FEELING LED TO THE OUSTER OF ALL SOVIET MILITARY ADVISORS IN EGYPT IN NINETEEN SEVENTY TWO.

WITH HIS PRESTIGE ENHANCED AFTER THE OCTOBER NINETEEN SEVENTY THREE WAR, PRESIDENT SADAT MOVED TO TRANSFORM THE EGYPTIAN REVOLUTION. AS HE REPEATEDLY SAID -- EGYPT NEEDED

PEACE. PRESIDENT SADAT RECOGNIZED THE NEED TO CHANGE THE ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CLIMATE IN HIS COUNTRY. IN THE FOREIGN POLICY HE DRASTICALLY CHANGED EGYPT'S RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES AND THE SOVIET UNION. THE VIOLENT OUTBURST OF RAGE IN EGYPTIAN CITIES WHEN THE GOVERNMENT REDUCED FOOD SUBSIDIES UNDERSCORED THE URGENCY OF THE PROBLEMS, THE NEED FOR RADICAL CHANGE.

PRESIDENT SADAT'S "PEACEFUL REVOLUTION," AS HE CALLS HIS LIBERALIZATION MEASURES AND THE RE-INTRODUCTION OF THE MULTI PARTY SYSTEM, AS WELL AS SUBSTANTIAL ECONOMIC AID FROM ARAB OIL PRODUCING COUNTRIES AND FROM THE UNITED STATES, HAVE INCREASED EGYPT'S CHANCES FOR ECONOMIC RECOVERY. AND EGYPTIANS RALLIED BEHIND PRESIDENT SADAT'S PEACE INITIATIVES HOPING FOR A MIDDLE EAST SETTLEMENT THAT WOULD PERMIT THEM TO GET ON WITH REBUILDING THEIR WAR-SCARRED COUNTRY.

PRESIDENT SADAT HAS PROMISED EGYPTIANS A SURPRISE IN HIS SPEECH ON SATURDAY -- THE EVE OF THE ANNIVERSARY. OBSERVERS EXPECT IT TO BE OF DOMESTIC NATURE, POSSIBLY SPELLING OUT MORE CLEARLY THE RULES GOVERNING DEMOCRACY AND LIBERALIZATION IN EGYPT.

JS/RTD